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## THE SETTING - ARGENTINA

You will be visiting Argentina at a time when the internal political situation is highly charged as a result of right-wing violence, which now goes beyond what one might define as counterterrorism and is related often to the internecine struggle for power within the Argentine Armed Forces. You will also be visiting during an unusually busy month of American travel to Argentina.

The power struggle. With the fight against terrorism virtually won, the attention of the Argentine Armed Forces is turning more and more to what might be termed reconstruction or "winning the peace." This means different things to the Argentine military. To Videla, it seems to mean an easier relationship with the political parties and unions with a view to the eventual restoration of democratic forms. To the so-called hardliners, such as General Suarez Mason, Commander of the First Corps (Buenos Aires) and to the Governor of Buenos Aires Province, retired General Saint Jean, it seems to mean purifying the country of the socio-political forces which gave rise to terrorism. The struggle for influence within the military is a deadly one, with civilians serving as the pawns of military ambitions. In July Argentina's Ambassador to Venezuela was kidnapped in Buenos Aires. The general assumption is that the kidnapping was designed to tarnish General Videla's successful visit to Venezuela. There are many other examples of right-wing terror aimed at polarizing society further.

This is a key moment, because the military promotions-reassignment cycle is coming up. Thus, there will be an opportunity to retire hardline generals. The fear exists, however, that these generals will continue victimizing civilians in order to make the situation as difficult as possible for Videla.

American visitors. After being off most official itineraries due to political violence, Buenos Aires is back on the map. During the month of August, in addition to your visit, Buenos Aires will receive the Hollings Senate delegation and the Yatron House delegation. Patt Derian will have already visited by the time you arrive, and Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs, George Dalley, will follow shortly. These visits have come at a particularly taxing time for our Embassy, which in early August was still completing a move to the new Chancery.

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